United Nations ECE/CES/2015/14/Add.6

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
16 June 2015

English only

Economic Commission for Europe

Conference of European Statisticians

Sixty-third plenary session
Geneva, 15-17 June 2015
Item 7 (a) of the provisional agenda
Reports on the work of the Conference of European Statisticians, its Bureau and Teams of Specialists

Implementation of the UNECE Statistical Programme 2014

Note by the Secretariat

Addendum

Report of the Eurostat/EFTA/UNECE Strategic Management Seminar on Quality Frameworks

Summary

Eurostat, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) jointly organized a Strategic Management Seminar on Quality Frameworks in Bečići-Budva, Montenegro, from 10 to 11 July 2014.

The objective of the seminar was to follow up on a number of recommendations from the Adapted Global Assessments and Light Peer Reviews in the region which addressed the need for more comprehensive quality assurance frameworks and the introduction of systematic quality management activities.

GE.15-10590E

Please recycle

I. Summary of the meeting

1. Eurostat, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) jointly organised a Strategic Management Seminar on Quality Frameworks in Bečići-Budva, Montenegro, from 10 to 11 July 2014.

2. The objective of the seminar was to follow up on a number of recommendations from the Adapted Global Assessments and Light Peer Reviews in the region which addressed the need for more comprehensive quality assurance frameworks and the introduction of systematic quality management activities. Different quality frameworks and initiatives in the region and beyond were presented in order to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the various frameworks, to find similarities and differences in the approaches countries have taken and to exchange best practices and common challenges.

3. The seminar was targeted towards directors-general and quality managers of national statistical institutes (NSIs) of the Western Balkan countries and Turkey. Quality managers from the European Neighbouring Policy (ENP) East countries were also invited. Representatives from Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo[1], the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine attended. The seminar further benefitted from contributions from Croatia, Lithuania and Iceland (in absentia). In total, 25 experts attended the seminar.

4. The meeting was organised into four sessions that built upon each other. It started out with a presentation by UNECE on international developments in quality management, in particular the UN NQAF[2] and the GSBPM[3], and a presentation by Eurostat on recent quality initiatives in the European Statistical System like the 'Fit for purpose' statistics approach, the revision of the statistical law, and the new round of peer reviews. This was followed by brief inputs on quality management practices in all countries, which triggered an intensive and substantive discussion in the plenary. Four presentations on experiences with quality management frameworks (ISO[4] certification, TQM[5], EFQM[6], European Statistics Code of Practice) further fuelled the exchange of practices and challenges of implementing quality systems as well as discussions in two groups on the advantages and disadvantages of the various frameworks and the role of these in managing change. An input on the ESS Quality Assurance Framework by Eurostat launched the final panel discussion which reflected on the way forward and needs for technical assistance. The key messages and follow-up actions of the two-day meeting are outlined below.

[1] This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution No. 1244 and the International Court of Justice Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

[2] NQAF: National (GENERIC) Quality Assurance Framework

[3] GSBPM : Generic Statistical Business Process Model

[4] ISO : International Organization for Standardization

[5] TQM : Total Quality Management

[6] EFQM: European Foundation for Quality Management

1. Key messages

(a) The countries are strongly committed to developing and strengthening the quality of statistics. They welcomed the timely opportunity to hear about experiences with several quality frameworks and discuss the various quality initiatives and activities that are being implemented in the region.

(b) Quality means first of all 'fit for purpose', not perfection. A 'fit for purpose' approach requires quality work on different levels adapted to the use and its context as well as the users and their needs.

(c) Generic models and frameworks are useful instruments to start a process and can be used as 'guideline' in order to develop the institution's own model that is adapted to the national circumstances. It was also recommended, however, to look for similarities with systems of other countries and to make good use of developments and best practices of others.

(d) The various frameworks all have their own emphasis and serve different main purposes. In order to select the most appropriate quality framework for a country, criteria need to be defined that reflect the situation in the country and the focus the country would like to put on certain elements of quality management. It was found that the GSBPM model was appropriate for a focus on organising production processes, ISO is a very well-known standard with a focus on documentation, EFQM is regarded as a framework targeted towards the top management while QAF is an exercise for change that focuses on all staff in the organization.

(e) There was agreement that whatever the framework is, the most important principle was to take a systematic and integrated approach towards quality management, starting with an analysis of the current situation. Once a framework is established, it needs to be broken down into a strategy with priorities, and a work plan with operating procedures describing who is doing what and by when, accompanied by work descriptions. It was stressed that a key to success is then to stick to the chosen procedures.

(f) Quality management goes beyond implementing a set of IT tools and drafting guidelines and handbooks. It needs to be streamlined into all statistical activities. In order to achieve this, it was regarded as essential to establish a quality culture on all levels of the organization, but particularly exemplified to staff through top management commitment.

(g) The meeting discussed the institutional set-up of quality management (QM) and the qualifications a quality manager needs to have. It was noted that although the set-up and size of a QM entity may vary – it can for example consist of a separate unit with several staff or of one quality manager who works with a quality working group or committee that consists of managers and/or experts from various units – the baseline message stays the same: the entity has to have full support of top management and the authority to put quality measures into effect. The quality manager, who might come from inside or outside the statistical office, will not only manage but will need to show leadership in the implementation of this strategically crucial activity. He/she needs to be a respected person in the office, who has both the hierarchical authority and the acceptance of colleagues to implement quality actions.

(h) Another critical feature of QM is how to get staff on board and prevent a certain fatigue after a couple of quality assessment rounds. It was proposed to actively involve staff in the process from the start through platforms where they can express their needs and ideas, suggestion boxes, an open door policy,

as well as by emphasising the real benefits like efficiency gains, sharing of good practices, addressing recurring problems at a higher level, etc. It was also stressed that continued training on all levels is necessary.

(i) The meeting acknowledged that the final decision on which performance indicators to select rests with the top management of an office. The selection of indicators will, however, differ according to national circumstances and priorities at a given time.

(j) Quality management does not stop at the doorstep of the NSI. Involvement of and advocacy with other producers of official statistics is key to a full implementation of a quality framework. Ideas to get them in the venture included setting up interagency working groups or organising common seminars and training.

(k) Participants acknowledged that advocacy is a task that could benefit from assistance from international and bilateral partners by facilitating preparation and exchange of advocacy materials, including examples of best practices and practical case studies of their applications.

2. Follow-up

(a) The EU Policy Group for Statistical Cooperation (PGSC), in its meeting on 30-31October 2014 in Antalya, will continue the discussion on the involvement of other producers of official statistics in quality management work and compliance with the Code of Practice;

(b) The UNECE, Eurostat and EFTA will consider the possibility to organize a seminar on quality management and compliance with the CoP involving both the NSIs and other producers of official statistics, possibly on a sub-regional level. This will be discussed by the organizing institutions of this seminar;

(c) The organization of a workshop on the European Statistics Code of Practice (similar to the one that was held for the ENP South countries' quality managers) could be considered for the region as well;

(d) The next Multi-Beneficiary Programme (IPA 2014) provides for a common project on Quality Management.

5. The report, the agenda, contributions and other material of the meeting are available at: http://www.unece.org/stats/documents/2014.07.tc.html.